Veeco Instruments forms Process Equipment Group

Veeco Instruments Inc of Woodbury, NY, USA has formed a Process Equipment Group to "maximise growth opportunities in the data storage and high-brightness LED industries".

"We expect revenue growth in this business [which has revenues of $225m per year in deposition and etch technologies] to exceed 15% in 2006, as market demand for converged consumer electronics with embedded storage and high-brightness LED backlit displays broadens, and Veeco introduces new Process Equipment solutions aligned to each market," says Edward H. Braun, chairman and CEO. "In HB-LEDs, our customers' roadmaps are demanding brighter films and higher levels of throughput," he adds.

Veeco has appointed Robert P. Oates, formerly in charge of its Data Storage Operations (Ion Beam and Slider Products) as senior vice president, Process Equipment Operations. In addition to the Ion Beam/Slider product lines, he will oversee Epitaxial Operations. Oates joined Veeco's predecessor company in 1976 and has served in many operational and financial roles.

"Veeco's senior management team is now aligned around our two primary lines of business: Process Equipment, led by Bob Oates, and Metrology and Instrumentation, led by Jeannine Sargent," says Don Kania, president and chief operating officer. "Along with providing technology and process solutions, the new Process Equipment organisation will emphasize the development of critical technologies to be implemented on standard product platforms across the organisation," he adds. Customers will see "improved time-to-market, strengthened customer process support, and better reliability."

"By leveraging our supply chain, shareholders will benefit from improved operational efficiencies over a larger critical mass of products," Kania continues. "We have made tremendous progress in improving the operational excellence and customer satisfaction of our data storage products under Bob Oates' leadership, and want to extend this success to all of our Process Equipment technologies."

Operating management reporting to Oates will be the vice presidents/general managers: Piero Sferlazzo (MOCVD operations); David Bruns (Slider Operations); Bill Miller (Ion Beam Operations); Jeffrey Hohn (MBE Operation).

* Veeco has orders for GEN2000 multi-wafer 7x6-inch MBE systems from two leading suppliers of GaAs-based RFICs, mostly power amplifiers for wireless handsets and wireless local area networks (WLANs).

"The MBE markets are showing increased signs of strength in the later portion of 2005 with higher demands for MBE processed substrates," said Hohn.

www.veeco.com

Nanometrics acquires Accent

Nanometrics Inc of Milpitas, CA, USA is acquiring process control and metrology system supplier Accent Optical Technologies Inc of Bend, OR, USA for $80.9m. Accent also has manufacturing and R&D operations in York, UK. Nanometrics stockholders will own about 73% and Accent stockholders about 27% of the combined company. Accent's chairman and CEO, Bruce C. Rhine, becomes chief strategy officer. Completion of the transaction is expected in first-half 2006.

With annual revenues of over $110m for the 12 months ended October 2005, the combination creates "one of the largest independent metrology companies in the semiconductor industry," said Nanometrics' president and CEO John D. Heaton. "The acquisition of Accent will expand our market position in each of our primary stand-alone metrology segments. Accent is particularly strong in overlay metrology, a market we are just beginning to penetrate."

"Accent's technology will also strengthen our position in optical CD and non-metal thin film metrology," he continued, "While we share a few key customers, each party brings a wealth of new opportunities for both integrated and stand-alone systems."

"We believe we will be able to capture substantial operating efficiencies that will position the combined company to accelerate earnings growth and enhance its financial performance throughout business cycles," said chief financial officer Douglas J. McCutcheon.

"Accent's overlay, FTIR and wireless/high-brightness LED products are a tremendous complement to Nanometrics' thin film and optical CD technology," added Rhine. "Now we will have the scale and strength to maximize potential."

www.nanometrics.com

Blue LED systems for Rainbow

Aixtron has received an order for a Thomas Swan 19x2" Close Coupled Showerhead (CCS) GaN epitaxy reactor from China's Rainbow Optoelectronics Material Shanghai Co Ltd (formerly LanBao Photoelectric Material Co Ltd), which now has one of the largest-capacity GaN LED plants in China.

LanBao entered the blue/green high-brightness LED business just over two years ago. Using the first mass-production MOCVD reactors for GaN LEDs in mainland China (the AIX 2400G3 HT), supported by Aixtron's Shanghai Branch Office, it developed commercial products. "Our strategic plan now requires us to add Close-Coupled Showerhead technology," said Rainbow's general manager Hun-Huang Liu.

"China is rapidly becoming one of the world's most important manufacturing regions for compound semiconductor devices and high-brightness LEDs," said Aixtron's executive VP Bernd Schulte.

* Hitachi Cable has qualified the 19x2" Close-Coupled Showerhead MOCVD system for mass-production of GaN HEMTs.

www.aixtron.com

Upgraded purifiers

Johnson Matthey's Gas Purification Technology group has replaced the HTG Series of palladium membrane-based bulk hydrogen purifiers with the new GPT Series, which enables purification of inlet gas quality as low as 99.99%.

Enhancements include a compact, single-cabinet design with a combined PLC control system (reducing the overall footprint), a touch-screen interface (for easy operation and quick viewing of key operating parameters, alarms and alarm history), and incorporation of a patented V-Purge System (first used on the HP Series POU purifiers, for quick and effective purging during start-up, shut-down and power failure).

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